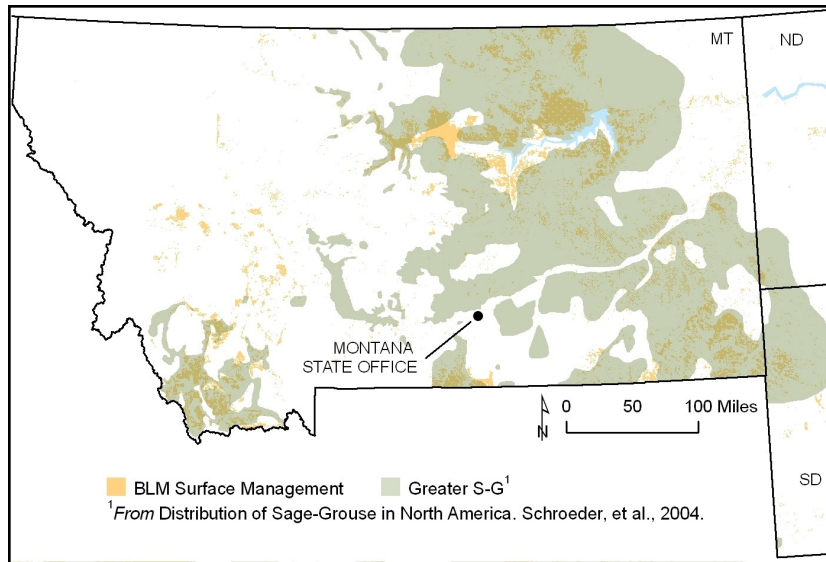


BLM-Montana/Dakotas

Sage-grouse Conservation Efforts

The resource management plans (RMPs) that cover most of the BLM-managed sage-grouse habitat in Montana and the Dakotas are being revised. This serves as a prime opportunity to update our sage-grouse conservation strategies. As part of these RMP revisions, we have developed a template for field offices to consider when developing RMP alternatives. This template complements the 'Core Areas' identified by the state agencies and will build on these areas for sage-grouse management. The template will help identify and analyze three management areas in the RMPs:



1. **Priority Protection Areas:** Contain good sage-grouse habitat and other resources, and have limited disturbances. Focus is on entire landscape, and protections will apply across all habitat. Objective is to improve and enhance habitat.
2. **Restoration Priority Areas:** Have the potential to contain good sage-grouse habitat and other resources but already have existing disturbances (energy development, fire, old fields, etc.). The emphasis within these areas will be to restore the habitat or reduce existing disturbances using new mitigation measures, offsite mitigation, or other program dollars while maintaining populations for potential future larger restoration efforts.
3. **General Habitat Areas:** Sage-grouse habitat outside the priority areas. Management will maintain habitat for connectivity to ensure genetic transfer and movement.

These areas will have common management guidelines for all uses. Monitoring will continue after an alternative is selected to evaluate whether management actions are meeting these desired population and habitat outcomes, and management will be adapted as applicable. Although BLM may not control enough surface or subsurface to completely maintain desired habitat conditions in some landscapes, the intent of this guidance is to provide enough flexibility for the identification and management of habitat areas unique to each field office while still meeting the overall sage-grouse habitat goals. Coordination across all jurisdictional boundaries will be imperative to maintain important sage-grouse areas.

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BLM-Montana/Dakotas is currently involved in several conservation efforts: a population viability analysis for sage-grouse in southeast Montana and the Dakotas, an analysis of genetic connectivity between populations, two studies to detect habitat usage and migration movements, and a study using satellite GPS collars to track habitat usage of migratory populations.

We have worked closely with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to refine management and to include private land management in sage-grouse conservation efforts. We have cooperated on projects to reduce conifer encroachment and invasive/non-native species, and, in an effort to minimize habitat loss to wildland fire, we made habitat mapping for wildland fire suppression use a top priority in 2009. The BLM will collaborate with the NRCS in implementing its *Greater Sage-grouse Habitat Conservation Strategy* in order to coordinate efforts in core sage-grouse habitat and to identify specific projects where we can cooperate. The BLM is working with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to ensure proper mitigation measures are in place to protect sage-grouse and other BLM sensitive species during treatments for grasshoppers. The BLM also participates in three greater sage-grouse local working groups that were established under the final *Management Plan and Conservation Strategies for Sage-grouse in Montana*. Yearly lek monitoring and data sharing is a high priority for all offices. We have developed data protocols with local Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) offices to facilitate information sharing. We also coordinate inventory and monitoring efforts with FWP, industry, and NGOs.

BLM-Montana/Dakotas continues to apply the best available information and science to ensure that the National System of Public Lands remains available for multiple uses while conserving greater sage-grouse and sagebrush habitat.

